

**Questions women  
most often ask about**

**National Institute  
of Mental Health  
Research Grants**





## **PREFACE**

In 1971, women submitted only 9 percent of all research grant applications received by the National Institute of Mental Health. As a result, the Institute initiated an active outreach program to provide women researchers with information about application procedures. By 1978, the percent of applications submitted by women had risen to 25 percent.

This brochure was prepared to help familiarize women researchers with the submission and review procedures of the Institute in order to continue the pursuit of equal opportunity for all researchers.

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Division of Extramural Research Programs

Data provided by  
Program Analysis and Evaluation Section  
Division of Extramural Research Programs

*Who can submit an application to the Institute of Mental Health?*

Any researcher affiliated with a university, college, research institute, hospital, or nonprofit organization can submit an application for a research grant.

*Is it necessary to have a Ph.D. or an M.D. to apply?*

NIMH does not require that an applicant have a graduate degree. However, many universities and research organizations have their own eligibility requirements. Some universities will accept applications only from tenured staff. It is wise to check with the institution from which you intend to submit.

*Where can I get application forms?*

Application kits are available in the research grants administration office of most major colleges and universities. Kits are also available from the Grants and Contracts Management Branch, NIMH, 5600 Fishers Lane, Rockville, Maryland 20852.

*What proportion of applications is from women?*

An average of about 1,700 research grant applications were submitted to NIMH between 1971 and 1978. In 1971, 9 percent of all applications were from women. By 1978, the percentage had increased to 25 percent.

### **Number and Percent of Submissions by Sex of Investigator**

<u>Male</u>		<u>Female</u>		<u>Total</u>
	<u>%</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>No.</u>
		133	9	1,400
		202	12	1,680
		265	14	1,910
		238	15	1,580
			18	1,590
			23	1,500
			20	2,000
			25	1,875

*If I submit an application to NIMH, what is the likelihood that it will be approved?*

About 45 percent of all applications submitted to NIMH between 1971 and 1978 were approved. However, applications in some research areas are more likely to be approved than in others. In general, applications for laboratory research have a higher approval rate than those in social areas.

*Are applications from women as likely to be approved as those from men?*

Between 1971 and 1976, applications from women generally were approved at a somewhat lower rate than those from men.

### **Approval Rates by Sex of Investigator**

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	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
1971	49	50
1972	47	45
1973	46	45
1974	47	42
1975	46	44
1976	41	37
1977	47	42
1978	47	41

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It is possible, however, that if the age of the investigator, research experience, and field of research are controlled for, the approval rates would be the same for both sexes.

*Who decides whether an application is approved?*

All applications for research grants undergo dual review by panels of non-Federal experts. The panels assess the scientific merit, competence of the investigator, adequacy of the research design, and relevance to mental health. Within NIMH are 13 Initial Review Groups, sometimes called Study Sections, which review research applications. These groups are organized in ten substantive areas of competence. Each group is composed of 10-15 members from academic and research institutions around the country. When an application is received, it is assigned to the Initial Review Group which has expertise in the area of research proposed.

Initial Review Groups meet three times a year to discuss applications and make recommendations. A committee may take one of three actions: Approval, disapproval, or deferral. If an application is approved, each committee member rates the application on a scale from 1 to 5, with 5 being high. These ratings are averaged and multiplied by 100 so that approved applications have a final score of somewhere between 100 and 500.

A second review of applications for research grants is conducted by the National Advisory Mental Health Council. The Council consists of 12 members, of whom 6 are scientific authorities and 6 are public representatives. Approval of the Council is necessary before an application can receive a grant award.

*Are there any women on the committees that review applications?*

Since 1975, 33 percent of all NIMH research grant reviewers have been women, but

*I once submitted an application and was told that it was approved, but I never got a grant. Why did this happen?*

Each year more applications are approved than there are funds available to support. In 1978, the Institute had only enough funds to pay about 57 percent of all approved research applications. Therefore, the priority scores assigned by the review committees are important. Given the ongoing shortage of research funds, only those applications with the highest priority scores and the most mental health relevance can expect to receive support.

*Are approved applications from men more likely to be awarded a grant than those from women?*

No. In fact, of the approved applications in 1971-1978, generally award rates were higher for women than men, as the table below indicates.

#### **Grant Award Rates on Approved Applications**

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	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
1971	74	81
1972	73	77
1973	65	65
1974	66	74
1975	61	68
1976	59	67
1977	61	64
1978	58	57

*Do men ask for larger grants than women?*

For almost every year between 1971 and 1978, the average amount of funds requested by male researchers was somewhat larger than the average amount requested by women.

However, when awards are made, investigators do not always get all the funds requested. Review committees may recommend budget changes. Reductions are made either because the budget is thought too high for the scope of work proposed or because of a general shortage of NIMH funds. As the table below indicates, women are often awarded a greater proportion of the funds

they request than men are. But as funds have become more scarce, both men and women are being awarded a smaller proportion of their requests.

**Percent of Award  
Proportionate to Amount Requested**

	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
1971	77	75
1972	73	74
1973	60	59
1974	68	78
1975	54	66
1976	58	59
1977	65	63
1978	55	62

*Is there a special program for researchers who have not had a lot of experience applying for grants?*

The "Small Grant" program is principally intended for the newer, less-experienced investigator, researchers at small colleges, and others who do not have regular research grant support or resources available from their institutions for the support of preliminary research explorations. Small grants also may be used to develop and test a new technique or method, to exploit an unexpected research opportunity, to analyze data previously collected, or to carry out exploratory or pilot studies. Small grants are usually limited to a maximum of \$10,000 for the direct costs of conducting the research plus indirect costs. The Mental Health Small Grants Committee meets five times yearly in order to speed up the review process.

Applications for research support may be submitted at any time, except applications requesting June, July, or August starting dates, which must be received by January 15.

Small grants have approximately the same approval rate as other grants.



*Where can I get further information?*

### **The research programs of NIMH**

Write: Public Inquiries Section  
National Institute of Mental Health  
5600 Fishers Lane  
Rockville, Maryland 20857

Ask for the booklet, "Research Support Programs and Activities," DHEW Publication (ADM) 76-322, 1976.

### **Membership of review committees**

Write: Public Inquiries Section  
National Institute of Mental Health  
5600 Fishers Lane  
Rockville, Maryland 20857

Ask for the most recent copy of the "Roster of Public Advisory Committees."

### **Consultation in developing an application**

Check in the "Research Support" booklet for the name of the chief of the program most related to your area of research. Write that person, giving a brief description of the work proposed and ask any questions you need to have answered. The address of the National Institute of Mental Health is:

5600 Fishers Lane  
Rockville, Maryland 20857

### **Consultation about research on women**

Write or call: Joyce B. Lazar  
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